

United States Marshals Service



FACT SHEET Witness Security Program

The Marshals Service provides for the security, health and safety of government witnesses — and their immediate dependents — whose lives are in danger as a result of their testimony against drug traffickers, terrorists, organized crime members and other major criminals.

No participant in the Witness Security Program who follows security guidelines has ever been harmed while under the active protection of the Marshals Service.

The Witness Security Program was authorized by the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970 and amended by the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984. The Marshals Service has protected, relocated and given new identities to 7,800 witnesses and 9,900 of their family members since the program began in 1971.

The successful operation of this program is widely recognized as providing a unique and valuable tool in the government's battle against major criminal conspirators and organized crime. Since the program's

inception, it has obtained an overall conviction rate of 89 percent as a result of protected witnesses' testimonies.

Witnesses and their families typically get new identities with authentic documentation. Housing, medical care, job training and employment can also be provided. Subsistence funding to cover basic living expenses is provided to the witnesses until they become self-sufficient in the relocation area.

The Marshals Service provides 24-hour protection to all witnesses while they are in a high-threat environment — including pretrial conferences, trial testimonials and other court appearances.

In both criminal and civil matters involving protected witnesses, the Marshals Service cooperates fully with local law enforcement and court authorities to bring witnesses to justice or to have them fulfill their legal responsibilities. A recidivism study found that less than 17 percent of protected witnesses with criminal histories are arrested and charged with crimes after joining the program.

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